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ABSTRACT

This report summarized the Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL) State Policy Program activities for 1985. McREL addressed the task of defining school quality by sponsoring meetings of regional deans of education in order to create interest in McREL's effective school activities and to encourage change in teacher education programs, and provided networking opportunities to those involved in programmatic and accreditation/certification changes. McREL also revised instruments for needs assessment and program planning and developed measures of school culture and of teacher and administrator leadership skills. In order to develop and support priorities for state service, McREL continued work on a state data base, provided strategic planning support for Kansas and Nebraska state boards of education and seven local districts, offered eight executive training programs for participants in educational planning situations, and conducted activities to further develop a networking strategy for the region. McREL staff made 46 presentations on state policy before state conferences during the year. (LFL)

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REPORT ON McREL STATE POLICY PROGRAM

Final Report - 1985

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McREL State Policy Program

Final Report - 1985

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to summarize and comment on the McREL State Policy Program activities for 1985. Detailed information regarding program activities may be found in McREL's deliverable products. This report will focus on things we have learned from our activities and their implications for future activities. Activities are discussed in order of their appearance in the 1985 proposal.

A. State Policy Component

Task 1: Define School Quality

Activity 1.1 Meeting of Regional Deans

Two meetings of the regional Deans of Education were held during 1985. The goals of the meetings were to create interest in McREL's effective schools activities and to document change in teacher education programs. The primary value of the two meetings was the opportunities for Deans to meet and discuss common interests and problems and to receive copies of materials on effective schools. Reports from four schools indicate that faculty have followed-up and are using McREL materials.

Less information was obtained regarding changes in teacher education programs. Although there were some reports of change in individual courses and the incorporation of new materials such as the effective schools research, there was little to support extensive change in teacher education.

In the future McREL will maintain the network of regional Deans of Education as a means of supporting course revision and encouraging larger programmatic changes. During a McREL Teacher Education Conference held November 1985 which was attended by teacher education institution representatives, SEA representatives, and teacher groups, several schools spoke of early plans for programmatic change. McREL will continue to work with these groups by providing networking opportunities and information to the institutions. McREL's work with SEAs as several states consider new accreditation or certification requirements (North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Missouri, and Colorado) may also provide an important force for program revision.

Activity 1.2 and 1.3 Alternative Systems Retreat

The McREL Effective Schools Training Model utilizes a number of instruments to be used for needs assessment and the design of a program "tailored" to fit the specific needs of a school. A retreat of researchers on alternative systems was used to identify measures which could be used as alternatives for planning effective schools programs.

Work which was completed during 1985-86 included the revision of McREL's existing instruments, the development of measures of school culture, and measures of teacher and administrator leadership skills.

Task 2: Develop and Support Priorities for State Services

Activity 2.1 Extended Data Base for States

The McREL state data base has been in a developmental stage during 1985. Achievements to date are the development

of the structures for the coding and storage of the data base, the use of the data base for environmental scanning and the development of training materials for state leaders, and the use of the data for trend analysis. Plans for the use of computers to facilitate access to data and to network data with state agencies and other McREL clients have also been developed.

The state data base activity will be expanded in the future as human and electronic resources are available.

Activity 2.2 Comprehensive Planning

Activity 2.2 refers to McREL's strategic planning activities with state and local education agencies. To date, McREL has provided extensive support for the development of the Kansas State Board of Educations' strategic plan, five-year plan, and one-year plans. Kansas is completing the second round of planning and implementing the first year plans which were adopted June 1985. McREL continues to provide support and consultation for the Kansas planning activities.

Nebraska has initiated strategic planning activities and McREL is providing assi tance in their efforts. The Nebraska plan is at an early stage of development and this activity will continue into the next year of McREL activities.

McREL has also provided limited strategic planning services to seven local districts in the region. A number of draft training materials have been developed for these sessions. These materials are being revised and extended for publication with ASCD.

Activity 2.3 Executive Development

Use of the strategic planning process led to McREL staff observations that many participants were having difficulty dealing with concepts that were essential to strategic planning. An executive development training approach was designed to be used as a preliminary step before strategic planning.

This training approach was used in eight programs during 1985, the most extensive being in a State Leadership Conference for representatives from Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri.

The training approach will continue to be used during the coming year and expanded.

Activity 2.4 Meta-Network on School Improvement

Since December 1, 1984 McREL has conducted a number of activities designed to further the development of a networking strategy for the region. The conceptual framework was refined and an analysis was conducted of important constituent groups and existing networks in the region. From these analyses, potential network participants were identified, and plans for future work were developed.

Over the past year, McREL has refined and focused the initial conception of a region-wide, meta-network. A "network of networks," or meta-network design provides a conceptual framework for describing a desired pattern of sharing and

diffusion among policy makers, practitioners, and service providers across the region. The intent of the McREL design is to support state-level policy development with multiple perspectives and needs.

Task 3: Project Dissemination

The bulk of state policy dissemination activity has been realized in presentations before state conferences sponsored by SEAs, state associations, universities or McREL. McREL staff made some 46 presentations in the region during 1985. Copies of Noteworthy were also used to disseminate information related to state policy making and leadership.